

Strengthening the Digital Branding Capacity of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) through Visual Content Optimization: A Community Engagement Program in West Java, Indonesia

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Abstract

Limited digital branding skills remain a major challenge for women entrepreneurs in the digital economy. This international community engagement program was conducted with the Digdaya Women Community in Karawang, West Java, Indonesia, to enhance digital branding capacity through visual content optimization. Using a participatory approach, the program combined training, mentoring, and hands-on practice based on international best practices. The results showed improved participant knowledge and skills in creating effective visual content and increased readiness to promote products through digital platforms. The program contributes to women's economic empowerment and supports Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 5, 8, and 9 by strengthening the competitiveness and sustainability of women-led micro and small enterprises.

Keywords: Women's economic empowerment; digital branding; visual content optimization; digital entrepreneurship; community engagement; international collaboration;

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1. Introduction

The Digdaya Women Community in Karawang Regency, West Java, is a women's empowerment community consisting of approximately 35 women-owned Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) operating in various business sectors, including culinary products, fashion, handicrafts, and household goods. Most members independently manage their businesses and primarily rely on conventional marketing methods and basic social media platforms, such as WhatsApp and Facebook, to promote their products. Although digital platforms have been utilized to some extent, their marketing activities remain suboptimal due to limited competencies in developing strong brand identities and producing engaging visual content. Based on preliminary observations, interviews, and discussions with community representatives, it was found that most members lacked adequate knowledge and practical skills in implementing integrated digital branding strategies.

Promotional content was generally simple, lacked consistent visual identity, featured low-quality product photographs, and rarely incorporated digital design applications such as Canva to support marketing activities. Furthermore, participants experienced difficulties in developing content calendars, optimizing social media for promotional purposes, and creating effective visual communication capable of enhancing product attractiveness and consumer trust. These findings indicate that the primary challenges faced by the partner community extend beyond limited access to digital media.

More importantly, members have insufficient capacity to utilize digital technology strategically to strengthen product branding and market competitiveness. In today's digital economy, MSMEs are expected to establish professional brand identities through attractive, informative, and consistent visual content in order to expand market reach and improve business sustainability.

In response to these identified needs, strengthening digital branding capacity through visual content optimization has become a priority for members of the Digdaya Women Community. Developing competencies in visual identity design, digital content creation, and strategic social media management is expected to enhance the effectiveness of digital marketing activities while expanding business opportunities for women-owned MSMEs. Therefore, this community engagement program was designed to provide practice-oriented training, workshops, and mentoring on digital branding and visual content optimization, enabling participants to independently implement sustainable digital marketing strategies in their respective businesses.

This program also supports the implementation of the Tri Dharma of Higher Education, particularly in the area of community engagement, and is consistent with Law of the Republic of Indonesia No. 12 of 2012 concerning Higher Education, which emphasizes the role of higher education institutions in applying science and technology to improve community welfare. Furthermore, the program contributes to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),

particularly SDG 5 (Gender Equality) through women's capacity building, SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) by enhancing the competitiveness of women-owned MSMEs, and SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) through the adoption of digital innovation in business development. Based on the identified needs and legal foundations, SMKN 06 Jakarta requires a learning platform that equips students with relevant skills to compete in the modern job market. The community service activity titled "*Mandarin Language Training for Business: Improving the Competitiveness of SMKN 06 Jakarta Students in the Global Workforce*" is designed as a solution to enhance students' employability and readiness to enter the competitive labor market.

The rapid development of the *Industrial Revolution 5.0* has changed labor demands, with Mandarin proficiency becoming an essential skill, particularly due to Indonesia's growing cooperation with China. In line with *Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4: Quality Education*, vocational education must not only focus on technical expertise but also provide global communication skills relevant to industry needs. Business Mandarin, as a tool for professional communication, is increasingly required in sectors such as trade, hospitality, and import-export. However, Mandarin communication skills are still underrepresented in the standard vocational curriculum. Therefore, business-oriented Mandarin training is urgently needed to prepare students for international collaboration and to improve their competitiveness. This program supports the achievement of SDG 4 by offering inclusive, relevant, and globally oriented education. The implementation of this program also aligns with the *Tri Dharma of Higher Education* and Law No. 12 of 2012, Article 11, which emphasizes the role of higher education in applying science and technology to improve community welfare. As part of community service (*PkM*), this program involves both lecturers and students under the *Merdeka Belajar – Kampus Merdeka (MBKM)* framework, fostering collaboration between academia and the community in advancing education quality and employability.

2. Methods

a. Implementation Steps

This community engagement program employed a participatory and practice-based approach involving 35 members of the Digdaya Women Community in Karawang Regency, West Java, Indonesia. The implementation of the program consisted of three sequential stages.

The first stage was a needs assessment, which was conducted through observations, interviews, and focus group discussions to identify participants' existing digital marketing practices, the challenges they encountered, and their training needs. The findings from this assessment served as the basis for developing training materials that were relevant to the participants' business conditions.

The second stage consisted of training activities, which comprised two sessions of approximately three hours each. The training covered digital branding concepts, visual communication, the use of Canva for digital content creation, smartphone-based product photography techniques, content calendar development, and social media optimization for business promotion. The learning process combined lectures, demonstrations, interactive discussions, and

hands-on practice to strengthen participants' knowledge and practical skills.

The third stage involved mentoring, during which participants received direct guidance in preparing promotional materials, designing visual content, and implementing digital branding strategies on their respective social media platforms. This stage enabled participants to apply the knowledge gained during the training while receiving continuous feedback and recommendations from the facilitators.

b. Evaluation

Program effectiveness was evaluated using several assessment instruments, including a **pre-test and post-test** consisting of 20 multiple-choice questions, observation sheets, participant satisfaction questionnaires using a five-point Likert scale, and documentation of the digital promotional content produced during the activities. The program's success was measured using four indicators: **(1)** a minimum 20% improvement in participants' knowledge scores between the pre-test and post-test; **(2)** a participant attendance rate of at least 80%; **(3)** an average participant satisfaction score of at least 4.0 on a five-point Likert scale; and **(4)** each participant's ability to independently produce at least one digital promotional content item by the end of the program. The evaluation data were analyzed using **descriptive quantitative analysis** by comparing pre-test and post-test scores, calculating the percentage improvement in participants' competencies, and summarizing participant satisfaction levels. The results of the analysis were used to assess the effectiveness of the training and mentoring activities in improving participants' digital branding knowledge, practical skills, and confidence in utilizing digital platforms for business promotion.

Table 1. Program Evaluation Results

Success Indicator	Before	After	Improvement
Average knowledge score	58.4	84.7	+45.0%
Participants able to use Canva	22.9%	91.4%	+68.5%
Participants implementing digital branding consistently	17.1%	88.6%	+71.5%
Average participant satisfaction score	-	4.72/5	Very High

3. Result and Discussion

a. Results

The community engagement program “Strengthening the Digital Branding Capacity of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) through Visual Content Optimization” was successfully implemented with members of the Digdaya Women Community in Karawang, West Java, Indonesia. The program aimed to enhance participants’ knowledge and practical skills in digital branding by introducing strategic visual content development to improve the online visibility and competitiveness of SMEs. The activities consisted of interactive training sessions, hands-on workshops, mentoring, and practical implementation of visual branding strategies using digital platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp Business, and Canva.

The evaluation results demonstrated a substantial improvement in participants’ understanding of digital branding concepts and visual communication principles. Prior to the program, most participants promoted their products using unstructured visual content with inconsistent layouts, colors, typography, and brand messages. Product photographs were generally of low quality, and social media posts lacked consistency in design and storytelling. After participating in the training and mentoring sessions, participants showed significant improvement in their ability to develop cohesive brand identities, create visually appealing promotional materials, and apply visual storytelling techniques to communicate product value more effectively.

The practical workshop enabled participants to produce digital marketing content independently using accessible design applications. Participants learned how to create branded social media templates, improve product photography using smartphones, select appropriate color palettes and typography, and organize content through simple content calendars. As a result, the visual quality and consistency of promotional materials improved considerably, allowing participants to present their products in a more professional and attractive manner. Another important outcome was the increased confidence of participants in utilizing digital platforms for business promotion. During mentoring sessions, participants successfully redesigned their social media profiles, implemented consistent branding elements, and scheduled regular promotional content. Several SMEs also adopted storytelling techniques to communicate product uniqueness and local cultural values, thereby strengthening customer engagement and brand authenticity. These improvements indicate that visual content optimization is not merely a design activity but an essential component of strategic digital branding that influences customer perception and purchasing decisions.

Participant engagement throughout the program was exceptionally high. Interactive discussions, collaborative design exercises, and direct feedback sessions created an active learning environment in which participants were encouraged to exchange experiences and solve practical marketing challenges collectively. This participatory approach enabled SMEs with diverse educational and business backgrounds to acquire practical digital marketing competencies that could be immediately applied to their businesses.

From the facilitators’ observations and participant feedback, the program successfully increased awareness of the importance of maintaining a consistent digital presence and continuously adapting branding strategies to changing consumer preferences. Participants recognized that attractive visual content, supported by a clear brand identity and consistent communication, contributes to stronger customer trust and improved market competitiveness. Many participants also expressed their commitment to continuing the implementation of the visual branding strategies after the completion of the program.

Overall, the program demonstrated that capacity building through visual content optimization effectively strengthens SMEs’ digital branding capabilities and supports business sustainability in the digital economy. By integrating training, mentoring, and practical implementation, the program empowered women entrepreneurs to improve their digital marketing performance while expanding opportunities to reach broader domestic and international markets. Furthermore, the initiative contributes to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 5 (Gender Equality), 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure) by promoting women’s entrepreneurship, digital innovation, and inclusive economic development.

Conclusion

This community engagement program successfully strengthened the digital branding capacity of SMEs through visual content optimization. Participants demonstrated improved knowledge and practical skills in developing consistent visual branding, creating engaging digital content, and utilizing social media more strategically for business promotion. The participatory approach combining training, mentoring, and hands-on practice proved effective in enhancing digital marketing competencies and increasing participants’ confidence in promoting their products. Overall, the program contributes to the sustainability and competitiveness of SMEs while supporting **SDGs 5, 8, and 9** through women’s economic empowerment and digital innovation.

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Conflict of Interest Statement (mandatory)

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article. All activities, findings, and conclusions presented in this paper were conducted independently and were not influenced by any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Informed Consent (if applicable)

All participants involved in this community service activity provided their **informed consent** prior to participation. They were informed about the objectives, procedures, and expected outcomes of the training program, and their participation was entirely **voluntary**. The data and documentation collected during the activity were used solely for academic and publication purposes, while maintaining the **confidentiality and anonymity** of all participants.

Ethical Approval (if applicable)

The research involving human participants in this community service activity complied with all relevant national regulations and institutional policies in accordance with the tenets of the Helsinki Declaration. Ethical approval for the activity was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the Faculty of Economics and Business, Universitas Negeri Jakarta, under approval reference number 382/UN9.5.FEB/PT/2025. All participants provided informed consent prior to participation. They were fully informed about the objectives, procedures, and expected outcomes of the activity, and their participation was voluntary. The confidentiality and anonymity of all participants were strictly maintained throughout the process.

Data Availability (mandatory)

The data supporting the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request. Certain data, such as participant information and training records, are not publicly available due to privacy and ethical restrictions.

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